

The causation of this deformity is a subject of the utmost importance, because, were this fully known, and did it receive due attention, much could be done to prevent what is a very common, distressing and intractable affection. In this paper, attention can be called to only a few of the most common and most controllable causes. The question of etiology is a vexed one, but the weight of authority inclines to the opinion that curvature is brought about mainly by mechanical causes.

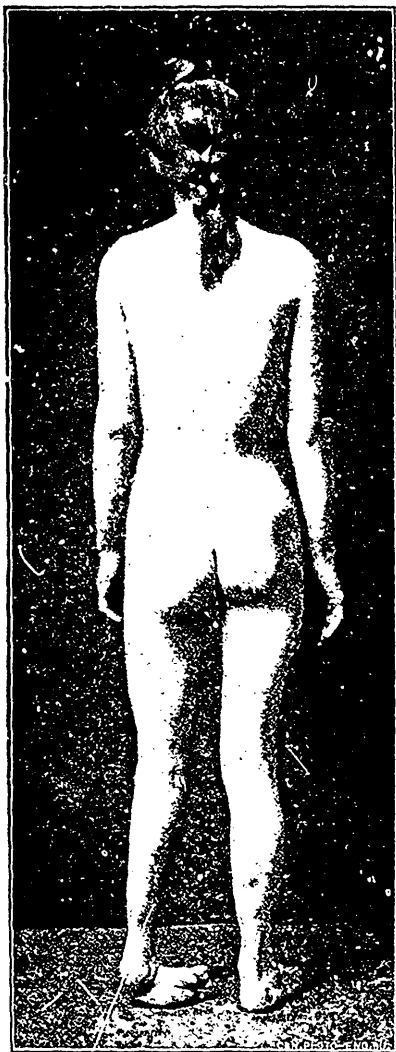


FIG. 1.

1. Difference in length of the lower extremities. Recently, authorities have been inclined to lay but little stress upon this asymmetry as a cause; but in the observation of the writer it is a very common cause. A considerable number of the cases observed had suffered from infantile paralysis, which had left one lower extremity shorter and weaker than its fellow. As a consequence, the pelvis on that side drooped constantly when standing or walking. In this manner, the plane of the base of the sacrum was inclined to the affected side, and a lateral curve of the lumbar vertebræ to the same side resulted. This is almost invariably accompanied by a compensatory curve to the opposite side, higher up in the spine. Sometimes a third curve is observed, compensatory to the second.

Often the extremities are found of unequal length when no definite cause can be assigned for this condition. Whatever the cause, however, of the inequality in the length of the extremities, it is reasonable to consider it as strongly predisposing to lateral curvature. Fig. 1 shows a case of slight curvature, resulting in a girl who had a club foot, and consequently a less-developed limb on that side.

2. There may be an obliquity of the plane of the base of the sacrum when there is no difference in the length of the extremities. Fig. 2 represents a case in which the extremities proper showed very little disparity, but the pelvis showed a very marked lack of symmetry in development. The left ileum was broad, and formed as it is seen normally

in the female, but the ileum of the right side was more inclined to the vertical, as in the male pelvis. The consequent inclination of the spine to the left is well shown in Fig. 2A.

3. An attitude of curvature at first assumed voluntarily, may become habitual. A school-girl may carry her books under her arm (Fig. 3); may habitually take a wrong